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# When God Called

by Kermit Netteburg

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**K**ermit Netteburg teaches journalism and public relations at Andrews University, where he is an associate professor of communications and edits the journal *Christian Scripts*. The following play was presented at the national conference of the Association of Adventist Women, July 11 to 15, 1984.

**Narrator:** God's calls for human helpers have come in unusual ways. He called Moses from a burning bush. He called Israel from a thunder-and-lightning mountain. He called Zacchaeus to come down out of a tree and he called Elijah to come out of a cave.

**Chorus:** Amen. God works in mysterious ways to call men to serve him.

**Narrator:** God also has called for some unusual things to be done. He called Jehosaphat's army to sing at the enemy instead of shoot at them. He called Peter to walk on water. He called Gideon to find the smallest possible army. He called Joshua to march around a city and blow trumpets at its walls.

**Chorus:** Amen. God called men in ancient times to perform his wonders in mysterious ways.

**Narrator:** God's calls in modern times have been no less unusual. He called a frail teen-aged girl to be a prophet to his remnant church. He called two young preachers to present the message of righteousness by faith to the older brethren during a General Conference session.

**Chorus:** Praise the Lord. He still uses men of courage.

**Narrator:** God called a farm housewife to be a successful evangelist in Oklahoma.

**Chorus:** A farm housewife! God called a farm housewife to preach!

**Single Voice In Chorus:** There must be some mistake. God calls women to be mothers and men to be leaders.

**Narrator:** Not according to the historical record.

**Chorus:** Maybe so, but it was never God's plan for women to be leaders outside the home.

**Single Voice In Chorus:** It doesn't work that way in God's church.

**Narrator:** It certainly worked that way in the beginnings of our church. Women were editors, business managers, doctors, teachers, ministers, evangelists, hospital administrators, and pioneer missionaries. The stereotype of women doesn't fit a church with a woman prophet who served the church for 70 years. The stereotype certainly doesn't fit in a church where Minerva Jane Chapman was treasurer of the General Conference for six years.

**Chorus:** A woman treasurer of the General Conference!

**Single Voice In Chorus:** I'll bet she couldn't even keep her own checkbook straight!

**Narrator:** Church leaders thought so highly of Minerva Jane Chapman that she was asked to be treasurer of the General Conference, editor of the *Youth's Instructor*, secretary of the Publishing Association, and treasurer of the Tract and Missionary Society—all at the same time. Another

woman, Adelia Patten, was asked to straighten out the financial mess at the Review and Herald Publishing Company that occurred when James White was ill.

**Chorus:** Did she fix it or cause it?

**Narrator:** She fixed it. Women in the early Adventist Church made contributions in areas other than finance, too. Take Dr. Lillian Eshleman Magan. She helped establish Madison College. Then when the college was established, she worked to put her husband, Percy, through medical school. Together, they devoted their lives to the medical work of the church. Dr. Kate Lindsay, one of the very first women physicians in America, started a nursing school at the Battle Creek Sanatorium.

**Chorus:** Yes. Nurses. Women make good nurses.

**Narrator:** I said Dr. Lindsay founded the nursing school.

**Single Voice In Chorus:** Weren't any of the early Adventist women housewives and mothers?

**Narrators:** Yes, many were housewives and mothers, loving and serving the Lord when he called them to be in the home.

**Chorus:** Amen. A woman's place is in the home.

**Narrator:** These women answered God's call to be mothers of future leaders in God's church.

**Chorus:** They did a good work. It's a great calling to be a mother.

**Narrator:** Some of these mothers even left their children, to answer God's call.

**Chorus:** They left their children!!

**Narrator:** Some mothers left their children—to answer God's call.

**Chorus:** God would call a woman to do that? Come on, give us an example. Who? What kind of woman would leave her children?

**Narrator:** Ellen White.

**Ellen White:** (*writing a letter*) My Dear Willie, we have not forgotten you, my dear boy. When we see the other little children around, we long to get our arms around our Willie again. In about five weeks we will be

home again, Willie, and then we will work in the garden, and tend the flowers and plant the seeds. Don't forget to pray, Willie. You can do that although I am not with you. Jesus, the dear Saviour, will hear you just the same when you pray alone. Your Affectionate Mother.

**Narrator:** Ellen White's baby, Henry, was only two years old, and she just slightly more than 20, when she and James left him. Many other women were also very young when they heard God's call. For instance,

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**“I received my call from Jesus himself. After his resurrection, he commissioned Mary to go and tell the brethren that he had risen. I am following in Mary's footsteps.”**

—Minnie Sypes

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Maud Sisley was only 26 when the fledgling Adventist Church sent her in 1877 to be the first woman missionary in Europe. That was just three years after John Nevins Andrews had gone to Europe. Most of her duties involved . . .

**Maude Sisley:** I'd like to tell my own story, sir.

**Chorus:** Uppity woman.

**Single Voice In Chorus:** I've never heard of her.

**Sisley:** Maybe not, but God did call me to be the first in many instances. I was the first woman missionary to Europe. I was a member of the first Tract and Missionary Society. Later, I was the first woman missionary to Africa.

**Chorus:** What could a woman missionary do?

**Sisley:** In Europe, I wrote and edited literature, contacted people interested in Bible studies, and tried to keep harmonious the relationships between the various nationalities in the European working force. One time there were eight of us in the headquarters office in Geneva, and no two of us

were from the same country.

**Narrator:** Some months later, God called Maud Sisley to work in England.

**Sisley:** I was happy to return to England, for that was the land of my birth. I was helping with an evangelistic effort in Southampton when . . .

**Charles Boyd:** Will you marry me?

**Sisley:** What did you say?

**Boyd:** I said, "Will you marry me?"

**Church leaders thought so highly of Minerva Chapman that they asked her to be treasurer of the General Conference, editor of the *Youth's Instructor*, and treasurer of the Tract and Missionary Society—all at the same time.**

**Sisley:** Who are you?

**Boyd:** I'm Charles Boyd, president of the Nebraska Conference. Come back to America and marry me.

**Sisley:** But this is so sudden.

**Chorus:** This is the way God calls women. God calls them to stand beside good men.

**Narrator:** Maud Sisley agreed, deciding that God was calling her to marry Charles Boyd. The Boyds spent four years in Nebraska and four years in the Pacific Northwest. Then the church felt the time was right for them to begin work in Africa. God called, and the Boyds pioneered Adventist work in Africa in 1887.

**Maud Boyd:** My husband was busy visiting the interests that had grown among the Dutch people studying the Bible. He was gone from home for weeks at a time. But I did my work near home, giving Bible studies. Soon we had a church meeting regularly. I was pleased when Elder I.J. Hankins arrived from America to pastor this growing church.

**Narrator:** South Africa was not good to the Boyds. Their younger daughter died, and Elder Boyd ruined his health from overwork. They returned to America for rest, but he died in 1898. (Pause.) Not every woman

who contributed to the Adventist church was the first to pioneer new work. But another woman, Georgia Burrus, was the first Adventist missionary to India, going there in 1895.

**Georgia Burrus:** I had an awfully hard time getting to India. Sister Myrtle Griffiths and I were to go together after we finished the nursing program at Battle Creek College. But the training was too strenuous for her, so I had to leave America alone.

**Chorus:** You mean she was a single girl going to a foreign mission land?

**Narrator:** Yes. That's correct.

**Chorus:** She'll never make it. A single girl just can't cope with the problems of life alone in a heathen country.

**Single Voice In Chorus:** What if she falls in love over there?

**Burrus:** As I was saying, I had a hard time getting to India. I was to meet the Robinsons in England and travel with them to India. But they were delayed and had to stay in England for an entire year. The mission board was not eager that I should go alone, because we were going to open new territory. But I promised that I would work as a self-supporting missionary if they only paid my way there. They did.

**Narrator:** Arriving in Calcutta, alone in the giant subcontinent, she spent her first night in a strange lodging house. Every sound was new, different, strange. She had dropped her watch on the ship's deck so that even its familiar ticking was gone. Georgia Burrus was so lonely she cried.

**Chorus:** I told you so. She couldn't last even one day!

**Narrator:** Georgia Burrus turned for help to the only friend she had in Calcutta.

**Burrus:** (praying) O Father, I am so lonely and homesick. I think if I could just hear my watch ticking again I would feel better. (Sound effect of watch ticking.)

**Burrus:** God answers small requests as well as large ones. You have no idea what a joy it was for me to have God answer my small prayer, to know that he was there with me in that strange country, and to know that

the call to India was God's call.

**Narrator:** Georgia Burrus supported herself that first year by teaching English to the Indians. But she spent most of her time learning the Bengali language. Each night she would plan her lesson in English and then have her Bengali language teacher help her translate the lesson into Bengali.

**Burrus:** I probably knew more Bengali than any other missionary did, and since Bengali and Hindi are such similar languages, I didn't think it at all unusual when the mission secretary-treasurer, L.J. Burgess, asked me to help him learn Hindi. We spent our noon hours under the palm trees studying the languages. We became quite fond of each other.

**Chorus:** We knew she'd fall in love with some foreigner!

**Burrus:** He wasn't a foreigner. He was an American missionary.

**Chorus:** That's worse! Falling in love with the married missionary!!

**Burrus:** No, no, no. He was a single American missionary who had been called by the mission board to be secretary-treasurer of our mission.

**Chorus:** Oh.

**Burrus:** We fell in love.

**Chorus:** Somebody back at the mission board must have been playing matchmaker.

**Burrus:** Perhaps, but we were married in 1903 and have lived happily ever after.

**Narrator:** L.J. Burgess and Georgia Burrus worked together in India for another 32 years. They prepared literature and spread the gospel in four of the major languages of India—Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, and Khasi.

Adventure was a normal part of the lives of men and women who answered when God called. Travel, which was primarily in open carriage and not in air-conditioned cars, could be very difficult in bad weather. Ellen White wrote to her family about the difficulties of getting to Waukon, Iowa, in a winter snowstorm.

**White:** Here we are, 12 miles from Waukon. We had a tedious time in getting thus

far. Yesterday our horses for miles had to plow through snow very deep, but on we came, feeling confident that our mission was of God. Last Monday, we could get no food that was fit to eat, and therefore rode in the coldest weather I ever saw, from morning until night, with nothing to eat but one apple. Oh, how thankful I shall be to see home, sweet home, again, and my three dear boys, Henry, Edson, and Willie. Last night we slept in a room where there was an opening through the top for the stove pipe. If it had stormed, it would have come direct in our faces. Pray for us. Unless the Lord opens the way for us to return, we may be blocked in with snow for the whole winter. Your Affectionate Mother.

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**In the beginnings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, women were editors, business managers, doctors, teachers, ministers, evangelists, hospital administrators, and pioneer missionaries.**

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**Narrator:** Another woman who found her share of cold winters, unfriendly neighbors, and adventure—Minnie Sype—listened to God's call to become an evangelist.

**Chorus:** A woman evangelist?

**Narrator:** Yes, the Oklahoma Conference asked Minnie Sype to become an evangelist in western Oklahoma. The Sype family—they had two sons and a daughter then—were established on a farm there. But God called and Minnie Sype answered.

**Chorus:** What kind of woman would leave her family to try to be a preacher?

**Narrator:** That's just what a minister asked Minnie Sype during her first evangelistic series. He even rented the hall she had been using, and preached that women had no right to speak in public.

**Chorus:** He's got a point there.

**Narrator:** Minnie Sype attended this meeting. From the middle of the audience, she announced that she would answer his insinuations the following night in the very same hall. The crowd at her meeting was larger than the one the previous evening.

There wasn't even standing room inside the hall, and some listened outside the open windows. Minnie Sype announced that she had tried to make a private peace with the minister, since he was her neighbor. However, he would not make that peace, and therefore she was making a public answer to him.

**Chorus:** That's fair.

**Minnie Sype:** I received my call from Jesus himself. After his resurrection, he commissioned Mary to go and tell the brethren that he had risen. I am following in Mary's footsteps, telling people that Jesus is coming again. Paul mentioned several women who were workers for God. Phoebe, for instance, whom he asks the church to assist. The Bible mentions the other women workers: Miriam, who assisted Moses; Deborah, who led the forces of Israel; Anna, who was a prophetess; and Phillip's four daughters who prophesied.

**Chorus:** That's right.

**Sype:** I came to Oklahoma only to be a blessing to mankind. I settled by this minister neighbor, expecting only to be a help in God's cause. But to my surprise, instead of being treated as a woman should be treated, as a co-worker, as a helper in God's cause, I was treated as heathen women are treated.

**Narrator:** By this time, the minister was looking at the floor and would not raise his head. Minnie Sype continued to appeal to his manhood, to his principles as a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus. She appealed so earnestly that some of the people were crying and some were laughing.

**Sype:** I will close, by wishing my fellow minister every success in the work. We're all brothers and sisters here, and we expect to support him in his work, as we expect him to support us in our work.

**Narrator:** Her public appeal worked. This minister-neighbor never again publicly opposed her. But other ministers did not stop. Minnie Sype became discouraged because she was spending more time debating ministers than proclaiming the gospel.

Shortly after she and her family moved to central Oklahoma, she held a series of evangelistic meetings in which 32 people were baptized. The local minister, whose church was being depleted, challenged her to a debate.

**Minister:** You are leading astray the people of the Lord with your teaching of strange doctrine, Mrs. Sype. I challenge you to debate truth.

**Sype:** I have called Elder Larson from the conference office, but he refuses to debate with you.

**Minister:** Mrs. Sype, you are teaching the strange doctrine, not some conference official. It is you I challenge to debate truth.

**Sype:** You would share your debating time with me, a woman?

**For 20 years, Sara Henry gave every moment of her life to the cause. She sometimes preached two or three times a day, often preaching every day for weeks at a time.**

**Minister:** I would. Will you or will you not debate with me on these strange doctrines you present as God's truth? Will you debate me on which is the proper day of rest?

**Sype:** I will.

**Narrator:** Debating procedure dictated that one debater would present the case in favor of a principle, the opponent would attempt to refute the case presented, and then the first debater would have a short time for responding to the refutation. The minister made his best case for the observance of Sunday as a day of rest.

**Minister:** In conclusion, let me quote from the third chapter of Matthew. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him." We must listen to this son of God as he commands us to worship on Sunday and hallow the day of his resurrection from the grave.

**Sype:** I appreciate my brother minister using the text about the son of God and that

we should listen to him. It is this son of God who created the heavens and the earth in six days—and then rested on the seventh day. It is this beloved son of God who came down on Mount Sinai and gave us the Ten Commandments, one of which says: ‘‘The seventh day is the Sabbath; remember to keep it holy.’’ If we truly listen to this beloved son, we shall keep the seventh day of the week holy to the Lord, not the first day of the week.

**Narrator:** The crowd for the following night’s debate was even larger than for the first night, and Minnie Sype presented the case for the seventh day of the week as Sabbath. She presented an array of texts from both Old and New Testaments pointing to the seventh day of the week as God’s holy day. When she finished, her opposing minister had a difficult task before him—to refute a wealth of Scripture.

**Minister:** I am sorry that we do not have more time. In the few moments given to me I cannot adequately refute the material that my sister minister has shared with us. If we could have more time, I am sure that I could satisfy your minds, as I have satisfied my own through much careful and thorough study, that Sunday is the proper day of worship. It is indeed unfortunate that I cannot have this last amount of time.

**Narrator:** With that he sat down, well before his allotted time was over. Minnie Sype still had her response time to use. She arose to speak.

**Sype:** I was very surprised to learn that my brother minister would be willing to share his debating time with me, a woman, in public. Now I am even more surprised that he is upset that he could not have the last word in a debate with a woman.

**Narrator:** The debates had such profound impact on the townspeople that the leader of the local Sunday school began keeping the Sabbath.

Seeing people accept present truth was a large reward to early women workers. Ellen White always found special joy in visiting homes of those she had earlier influenced

to accept present truth. One such home was a hotel, and from there she wrote to her children:

**White:** We are now at Brother Snook’s. This is a good home. When I see their little babe, and take it in my arms, I yearn for my own dear babe which we laid in Oak Hill Cemetery; but I will not permit one murmuring thought to arise. I enjoy the society of this family. Sister Snook is an excellent woman. Your Affectionate Mother.

**Narrator:** The fellowship of believers was a source of great joy to the women that God called, such women as Ellen White, Georgia Burrus Burgess, and Minnie Sype. But not every woman that God called enjoyed the fellowship of believers. Serapta Myrenda

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**After Dr. Lillian Eshleman Magan helped establish Madison College, she worked to put her husband, Percy, through medical school. Together, they then devoted their lives to the medical work of the church.**

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Irish Henry had never heard of Seventh-day Adventists when God called her. Faced with raising three children after her husband’s death, she turned to writing and teaching school. How this quiet, retiring woman came to lead the Women’s Christian Temperance Union is a story of answering when God called.

**Serapta Henry:** One day I found my son with some dirty candy in his hand. He told me he had gotten the filthy candy in the store behind him. I had never seen a saloon before, so I didn’t recognize the building. But I told him I wanted to see that store owner. Over his protests, we walked inside. I was appalled. It wasn’t just the stench and the filth, but the sight of men reduced by drunkenness. It was a sight I couldn’t forget.

**Narrator:** Sara invited church ladies to the house to urge them to do something. They agreed that something should be done, but would not lead in any effort. Sara asked her

pastor to lead out; he also declined. Sara Henry tried to escape the mantle of leadership, but it would fall nowhere but on her shoulders. Long past her normal hour for sleep she paced the floor. Suddenly the dilemma was clear: would she answer God's call, or would she disregard it?

**Henry:** As soon as I understood the problem, I said I would do what God had called me to do. Immediately I felt peace and immediately I knew what I had to do. I wrote special notices to all the churches in the area asking for a special prayer meeting the following Wednesday night during which we would discuss this liquor problem. Then I went to sleep.

**Narrator:** But Sara Henry was not through fighting with her own timidity. The morning of the meeting she awoke paralyzed. She could not move because of her fear.

**Henry:** I called my women friends to pray for me, and I promised that I would be at the meeting that night. All day I stayed in bed. Finally, after supper, the women got me out of bed, dressed me, and took me out to the carriage. I was still mostly paralyzed with fright. But at the sight of the church and the large crowd that had gathered in support of the fight against liquor, I forgot myself and my strength returned.

**Chorus:** Good.

**Narrator:** From that night on, Sara Henry found the strength each day to answer God's call to become a public evangelist, proclaiming both the blessings of Christianity and the evils of liquor. For 20 years, she gave every moment of her life to the Women's Christian Temperance Union cause. She sometimes preached two or three times a day, often preaching every day for weeks at a time. She became the official national evangelist of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, this shy mother of three who heard when God called.

**Chorus:** Well, what do you know!

**Narrator:** But God planned to call Sara Henry again. God's calls are not always to do his work. God's calls sometimes are sim-

ply to love him more completely. Twenty years of ceaseless work had made an invalid of Sara Henry. So, she turned to the Battle Creek Sanatorium. Friends warned her that the doctors there would try to change more than just her health. They would try to change her religion.

**Henry:** It's not likely that anyone my age with my convictions would change her views. I'm too stubborn and too old to have anybody at Battle Creek do anything to me physically, much less in other ways.

**Narrator:** But Sara Henry's first Sabbath at the Battle Creek Sanatorium did change her. She was impressed by the way the work routines changed. No examinations. No exercises. No special treatments. No unnecessary work. Special worship services. Sara Henry vowed that first week that she would keep both Sabbath and Sunday as long as she stayed there. Weeks later, a large group came to ask her for help.

**Group Of Patients:** Mrs. Henry, we know you are a great evangelist for the Lord. We patients are perplexed about the Sabbath and Sunday business. Would you please show us the Bible texts that prove Sunday is the Lord's day?

**Henry:** I recited to them several of the texts supposedly used to prove the sacredness of Sunday. But even as I spoke the texts fell flat from my lips. I was chagrined. My

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**Adventure was a normal part of the lives of those who answered God's call: "Last Monday, we rode in the coldest weather I ever saw, from morning until night, with nothing to eat but one apple. Oh, how thankful I shall be to see home, sweet home, again."**

—Ellen White

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best reasons were the traditions of men, not Scripture. I was so embarrassed I told them they were all old enough and intelligent enough to search the Scriptures for themselves.

**Narrator:** Sara Henry studied as much and as often as her frail strength would

allow. But the devil taunted her, reminding her of her past dedication to Sunday sacredness.

**Devil:** You'll never decide in favor of the seventh day, Serapta. If your soul's salvation depends upon this, then your soul is lost.

**Henry:** My soul is not lost. It is in God's keeping. I will answer God's call to keep the Sabbath.

**Narrator:** Sara Henry renounced her former belief and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Almost immediately, her former associates in the Women's Christian Temperance Union ridiculed her.

**Henry:** I was heartbroken. I could not understand how they could fail to hear God's call to the seventh day.

**Narrator:** Sara Henry was not the only woman to endure personal heartaches for answering when God called. Maud Boyd buried a daughter in the African mission field. Minnie Sype saw one of her sons die without accepting the present truth she had been teaching. Ellen White already had buried one child when James received impressions from a dream that all was not well with the children. God was calling

James and Ellen to be with their children. Immediately, the couple left their preaching itinerary and returned home.

**White:** When we arrived home, son Henry was already quite sick and confined to bed. He said that he felt unprepared to die and asked us to pray for him. After we had prayed, he called his two brothers to him, hugged them each, and asked their forgiveness for his petty meanness to them. Later, he said he felt peace with Jesus. As his breath came shorter and shorter, he looked at me one last time and said, "Mother, I shall meet you in heaven in the morning of the resurrection, for I know you will be there."

*(pause)* I will, Henry, I will, For God has called me there, and I will answer.

**Narrator:** God calls each of us today. It may not be to India or to Africa or to the General Conference, but God calls each of us. It may be that God has called you to preach the gospel, or to practice medicine, or to witness for him in your own unique way. But God calls each of us.

**Chorus:** He calls both women and men.

**All:** He calls all of us, and we will answer.